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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL: Israel and Egypt appear to be edging toward an agreement to resume disengagement talks at Kilometer 101.

An Egyptian Government spokesman yesterday said that indirect diplomatic contacts between Egypt and Israel are under way and results can be expected "perhaps in the immediate future." Cairo still insists, however, that before it will agree to resume the talks Tel Aviv must indicate a willingness to change its "intransigent" bargaining position on troop pullbacks. Lower level contacts between Israeli and Egyptian military commanders, meanwhile, are continuing. Local commanders along the front are keeping in touch and meetings have been held at Kilometer 101 to discuss matters such as the transfer of supplies to Suez city.

For the second consecutive day, relatively heavy exchanges of fire erupted on the Syrian front. The Syrians apparently again fired on Israeli construction activity near the cease-fire lines with small arms, anti-tank, and artillery. Damascus claims to have destroyed one bulldozer and a half-track and killed or wounded 15 Israelis at a cost of one Syrian killed and four wounded. The Israelis admitted to four wounded.

Tel Aviv plans to present reports to the International Red Cross and other international organizations charging Egypt with torturing Israeli prisoners of war, according to an Israeli radio broadcast. The broadcast claimed officials debriefing the POWs learned of torture and even murder by the Egyptians. In an initial response, an Egyptian Embassy spokesman in London denied the Israeli allegations and countered with charges of Israeli mistreatment of Egyptian POWs.

Some influential Israelis, meanwhile, may be arguing for a more flexible Israeli position concerning a possible US security guarantee for Israel as part of a Middle East peace package. In a newspaper article on 2 December, an Israeli journalist, who

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in the past has reflected Minister of Defense Dayan's views, called for a fresh look at the idea and additional discussions with the US. Noting Senator Fulbright's call for a Senate-confirmed US-Israeli defense tie, the journalist pointed out that such confirmation would bind future US administrations and would be much more meaningful than previous arrangements. In an apparent response to Prime Minister Meir's position that international guarantees are no substitute for defensible borders, the article states that American "physical and concrete" guarantees should influence Israel's decision on secure borders.

Another Israeli journalist, meanwhile, probably reflected the views of more hard-line Israeli groups when he stated in the Jerusalem Post on 30 November that the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) must find a new deterrent formula to impress upon the Arabs the hopelessness of future military action. The author claims that only continued mobilization and a permanent high state of alert will keep the Arabs at bay, but admits that Israel would find this "intolerable." The IDF, he says, must therefore develop a doctrine that exploits fully Israel's new weapons systems and superior manpower.

Some Egyptian commentators continue to emphasize the military option in the Middle East equation. One commentator claimed yesterday that Egyptian armed forces are in a constant state of alert and that Israel's behavior can be influenced only by American pressure or Arab military pressure.

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